

September 2005 AKC Gazette
French Bulldog Breed Column:

CAUTIONARY TALES

Most Frenchie owners are well aware of the more common hazards for their dogs: ingested foreign bodies (rocks and socks are SO good!), toxic materials (plants, lawn chemicals and pesticides, antifreeze, human medications, garbage), electric cords, and bee stings to name just a few. It bears reminding owners about other less obvious things that can harm Frenchies.

Batteries. Those little disc batteries for hearing aids and watches are very toxic, and are irresistible to dogs. If your dog swallows one get it to the vet immediately, as within a very short time it can begin leaking caustic materials that will burn the dog's stomach or gut.

Air Bags. Never let your dog sit in the front seat of your car, as the air bag will probably kill the dog if it deploys. Either crate the dog or get a special safety harness that hooks to the seat belt in the back seat.

Cocoa Bean Mulch. Cocoa bean hulls make a nice garden mulch, but it smells good so dogs are attracted to it. Cocoa hulls contain high levels of theobromine, the same chemical that makes chocolate bars harmful to dogs, and even a small amount of the mulch can poison a dog.

Bird Droppings. If you have a bird feeder, put it in an area where the dogs don't go. Dogs like to eat the seeds dropped on the ground, and unfortunately those are generally mixed with bird droppings. Salmonella poisoning is the likely result of this indiscriminate snacking.

"Linear foreign bodies" ... string, yarn, dental floss, shoelaces, tinsel. Though dogs are less tempted by these tasty morsels than cats are, some Frenchies can't resist them. Any long string-like material can be fatal if eaten, as it tends to stretch out in the intestinal tract and if one end of it becomes anchored somewhere, movements of the gut will cause it to "saw" through the intestinal wall. The resulting spillage of gut contents into the body cavity can be rapidly fatal.

Styrofoam. Styrofoam cups, packing peanuts, decorative items can kill a Frenchie. A chunk of styrofoam can lodge in the airway, suffocating the dog. If it makes it into the stomach or intestine, it can cause a blockage there. Styrofoam cups that have contained some tasty beverage are especially enticing to dogs.

Pools. Most Frenchie owners know that Frenchies are NOT swimmers, and can easily drown in even a decorative pond in the garden. Less obvious is the danger posed by swimming pools with covers. In too many instances, adventuresome Frenchies have managed to crawl under a swimming pool cover and drown because no one sees them struggling to stay afloat.

Inappropriate toys. Rawhide chews, pigs' ears, and cow hooves are especially

dangerous. Rawhide and pigs' ears can become softened and clog the dog's airway, suffocating it. If swallowed, they can obstruct the gut. Hooves splinter, and a sharp shard can pierce the palate or cheek. A swallowed chunk of hoof can cause a fatal gut obstruction as well. Give your dog only the indestructible hard rubber or nylon chew toys that even Jaws of Steel can't shred.